

Through Mach 1, 60,000 feet.
There are gold hills, old stones as well,
carried in the mind —
the Concorde's fuselage cold,
the young hand touching a shoulder — voice
smooth, polite — "Canapés sir? Bollinger?"

PRISCILLA WHITE'S LUNCHEON PARTY

The guests in the drawing room began
talking. Caught in the silence of old
furniture, they had waited
for a signal from the other side of the door —
so still a maid might have whisked them
off a chair or a sofa
with an ostrich tail duster — not one
eyelash would have moved.

Suddenly the signal, caught by each,
ran wildfire sentences together.
Did you read that the Prime Minister died
in his dreamless sleep? Rosemary White
had three children at the same time —
someone else died, I've forgotten his name,
a niece born on the Horn of Africa — birds
migrating — lemons ripe in Seville.

Somehow all the pieces of their conversation
made sense to the tables and chairs.
There was an Art Deco water color, a Siren
playing a sitar, in a blue pastel gown flowing
around her like seawater — Everyone looked —
Silence — a feel of wavelets on the feet,
sandcastles subsiding as the tide
played its "touch and tell" game with the truth.

At 5PM the front door closed on the last guest.
A halfeaten biscuit was on a plate, a glass of Chardonnay
untouched, warned "Do not disturb the disorder" —
statements about children and husbands,
the latest BMW's ABS brakes. Fragments of speech
no one will ever decipher — and the seawater coming
and going — tides brushing away sandcastles, Rosemary
White, Seville — a feeling no one was here.

ENCOUNTER WITH A FOX WHEN I WAS 10

I remember the red fox
on a hill right at dawn —
I had come there to inspect
the rabbit traps I set

the evening before —
take the small hunched forms
out of the jaws of iron
kill and skin them —
reset the traps for more.

I sat looking downhill
at the river sliding by,
silent and the steel dusty
light of the rising sun,
leaf shadow — and the cut stone
that I was, not moving one breath —
so the fox came within three feet

Facing, we stared at each other,
stone blasted, still,
no twitch of arm
nor even his green eye looking in
as he dug into me and I
to him, deep to
ancestry and origin

stood there, sat there — still —
among the rabbit carcasses
and the skins and the sun's blade
skinning the dawn sky,
each powerful as an anvil,
stock still in the knocked silence
of beast against beast against hill
and the cold metallic grip of the traps
touching one another
and the day's kill.

— John Millett

Berrima NSW-2577, Australia

AFTER TU FU

This June snow
has surprised everyone —
fat flakes have dusted
the branches, dirt and
pine needles. Even the
clumps of lady bugs don't
know what to make of it.
Spreading our blanket,
we picnic all the same.